

July 15th, 1938

Dr. Charles J. Turok  
Board of Christian Education  
Witherspoon Bldg.  
Phila., Pa.

Dear Dr. Turok:

Dr. E. Graham Wilson has referred to me your correspondence relative to the situation among the natives in Alaska. In view of the action of the N. L. R. B. which has turned over the fishing industry to the tyranny of the C. I. O. Doubtless your attention was called to this matter by the enclosed press release which I wrote and which has been widely published.

I hope that your letter to the President will do some good, but I am not at all optimistic about it because he has sold out industry to the C. I. O., and in order to seal the bargain he invented the N. L. R. B. which appears to have interpreted its particular function to be the beating down of the owners of industrial establishments to meet the unreasonable demands of the C. I. O. I have not heard of the N. L. R. B. in a single case showing any interest whatever in the welfare of the management or ownership of industries.

Recent reports which I have received from Alaska indicate that the conditions are somewhat improved from what they were at the time I wrote this press release. Some of the canneries which were <sup>not</sup> expected to open are opening on part time. Undoubtedly the natives are in for a bad time, and by next year, when the C. I. O., with the backing of the N. L. R. B., has had a full year in which to work things out to suit their own purposes, the Alaska native is going to be in a sorry plight.

It is my purpose to bring this matter before the Alaska Committee of the Home Missions Council in order to bring



some pressure to bear upon Washington, representing inter-denominational interests in the Alaska natives. Our experience, however, in making similar approaches to the present administration does not encourage us to expect very much more than a polite reception of our representations and an immediate dismissal of the matter from their minds.

I appreciate your interest in the matter. Have you any contacts down in Washington that would justify you in expecting that we could get anywhere with a strong protest against disqualifying native Alaskans from membership in the labor unions, or against the efforts of the N. L. R. B. and the C. I. O. to tyrannise over the fishing industry in Alaska in such a way as to deprive the natives of their only means of livelihood? I will be glad to join you in pushing up any alley that seems to promise anything at the end of the line.

By all means let me hear from you regarding this important matter.

Faithfully yours,

JMS:PDS



BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION  
OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
HAROLD MCA. ROBINSON, GENERAL SECRETARY

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL EDUCATION AND ACTION  
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*Address 156 Fifth Avenue, New York City*  
ELSIE G. RODGERS, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

932 WITHERSPOON BUILDING  
PHILADELPHIA, PA.

July 18, 1938

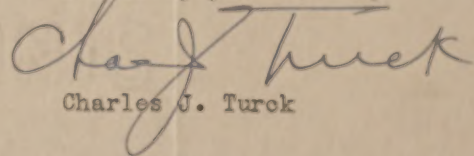
Dr. J. M. Somerndike  
156 Fifth Avenue  
New York, N. Y.

Dear Dr. Somerndike:

I have just returned from a three weeks' trip, and my letter to the President has not yet been acknowledged. I presume it has gone from his hands to some department, and I will ultimately get an acknowledgment.

I am writing one or two friends in Washington to see whether we would get anywhere with a strong protest against disqualifying native Alaskans from membership in the labor unions. When I get replies, I will communicate again with you.

Sincerely your friend,

  
Charles J. Turck

CJT/H

C O P Y

July 25, 1938

While I would like to be more accurately informed as to all of the facts before replying to your letter, I doubt that it is possible to obtain an accurate appraisal of the situation without a very thorough investigation extending beyond the jurisdiction and activities of this Board.

I am informed that it has been the practice in years past on the part of the cannery companies to operate some canneries with natives of Alaska, and some with employees brought north from Puget Sound and Columbia River ports, and San Francisco, and others with combined crews. I also gather that since the change from the labor contractor method of employment to the union hiring halls in the United States ports, these unions have become stronger and perhaps have succeeded in making more jobs available for their members. On the other hand, there have been efforts during the past 2 or 3 years by natives of Alaska to build labor organizations for the purpose of making available more jobs for natives of Alaska. So far as I am able to determine this Board has not been concerned with any matters which furthered the interests of one group or the other, other than the determination of the agencies representing the majority of the cannery workers hired in the United States, for the purpose of collective bargaining.

The question of whether employees shall be hired in Alaska or in ports of the United States is solely one for the employer to determine and not this Board, so long, of course as there is no violation of the National Labor Relations Act.

Extracts from a letter received  
from Dr. J. Warren Madden, Chair-  
man of the National Labor Relations  
Board.



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932 WITHERSPOON BUILDING  
PHILADELPHIA, PA.

July 27, 1938

Dr. John Somerndike  
156 Fifth Avenue  
New York, N. Y.

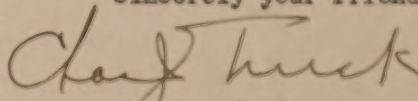
Dear Dr. Somerndike:

In regard to the employment of natives of Alaska in Alaska canneries, I had a letter from Dr. J. Warren Madden, Chairman of the National Labor Relations Board. He points out that the only activity of the Board is related to the determination for the purpose of collective bargaining, of the agency representing the majority of the cannery workers hired in the United States. The Board apparently does not have jurisdiction over the hiring of labor in Alaska.

Evidently, there has been some change from the labor contractor method of employment under which some canneries operated with natives of Alaska and some with employes brought north from Puget Sound and Columbia River ports, and from San Francisco. The present method seems to be the hiring of men through the union hiring halls in the United States ports. The jurisdiction of the Board apparently covers the hiring in the union hiring halls in the United States ports. But the Board is not responsible for the decision of employers to hire in Alaska or to hire in the United States ports. If the employers hire in Alaska, the National Labor Relations Board has nothing to do with the case. If they hire in the United States ports, they must deal with the agency representing the majority of cannery workers hired in these United States ports.

Undoubtedly, United States unions must be putting pressure on the cannery companies to hire in the United States ports and not to hire natives of Alaska. This seems to be the root of the trouble. All that I have written above is merely a deduction which I have drawn from Dr. Madden's letter, and I am enclosing a copy of the three paragraphs of his letter that deal specifically with this situation. If you have any suggestion as to how I may follow this up further, I shall be glad to hear from you.

Sincerely your friend,

  
Charles J. Turck

CJT/H



July  
28th  
1938

Rev. Charles J. Turck, D.D.,  
952 Witherspoon Building,  
Philadelphia, Pa.

Dear Doctor Turck:

Thank you very much for your letter of July 27th. I have read the excerpts from Dr. Madden's letter to you. It is quite natural that he would absolve the National Labor Relations Board, whose record thus far has been a stench in the nostrils of every decent American because of their highly prejudiced attitude toward employers of labor and their open espousal of the undemocratic and thoroughly un-American tactics of the C.I.O. I receive regular newspapers from towns in Alaska, such as Ketchikan and Juneau. The difficulty in Alaska arises out of the fact that notwithstanding the peaceful conditions that have prevailed under the collective bargaining system of the A. F. of L. - with which most of the Alaska canneries have been dealing satisfactorily - the National Labor Relations Board instructed the C.I.O. to go up there, ignoring the satisfactory relations that existed between the employers and the A. F. of L., and proceeded in their usual tyrannical manner to order the employes out of the canneries, picketing them and in accordance with their usual custom preventing even the representatives of the owners of the canneries from entering their own plants. The blame for the whole situation must rest upon the shoulders of the National Labor Relations Board, which as now seems quite clear is another device invented by the present administration to strengthen the influence of the C.I.O. - which has clearly demonstrated by the methods it has pursued that its leaders are unworthy of the confidence of any right-thinking person, and that its methods and objectives are not worthy of the support of any self-respecting American.

You may think this is strong language, but it seems to me that the time has come when the honest judgment of people who think sanely and clearly with reference to the present chaotic situation should have an opportunity for expression. Dr. Madden's statement begs the real question. The Alaska canneries are perfectly willing to continue to employ local labor, and they certainly have no desire to complicate their situation by employing labor from the United States - because they realize even better than the National Labor Relations Board that in so doing they would be inviting the interference of the C.I.O. Fortunately, the City Council, the merchantmen, and the decent citizens of Ketchikan under the leadership of a courageous mayor, served notice on the C.I.O. representatives that the canneries must open on July 18th; and as is always the case when respectable public opinion asserts itself, the C.I.O. was put to flight and the canneries opened. The mayor and the decent citizens of the community were on hand to see that they were opened without interference on the part of the C.I.O., and I am glad to tell you that the C.I.O. abandoned the fight and has withdrawn from the scene. They even signed a statement to the effect that the dispute between the United Fishermen's Union and the cannery operators had been adjusted, and all crews were instructed to return to work. One has to have something of a sense of humor to appreciate the final sentence of the statement. This is a gem: "Cannery operators have full permission to can fish." Can you beat that? What a long way we have come since the flag of freedom was first unfurled in this America.



I want to thank you for your good offices in corresponding with the President and the National Labor Relations Board. Our experience with representatives of the present administration in relations with Indians and Alaskans quite discouraged me from expecting any sort of a response to an approach to the representatives of the various Bureaus set up by the present administration to any considerations presented by the Christian forces of America. The profanity that one meets even in ordinary conversation with high officials of the present administration, together with the self-assurance and contempt that they have for any point of view but their own (whatever that may be) makes one who cherishes his self-respect somewhat reluctant to deal with people of that type. The only ray of hope in the whole situation is that some of them still give indications of being somewhat sensitive to the claims of common justice, especially when they are presented by representatives of the Christian constituency of the Country. What a wonderful opportunity there is in the present situation for the Christian people of America to march together under strong leadership and with a reaffirmation of Christian principles of justice and democracy demanding that those who govern shall do so as in the sight of God, and not for political exploitation!

With warm personal regards, I am

Faithfully yours,

JMS:BE



July 29th, 1938

Rev. Charles J. Turck, D. D.  
932 Witherspoon Bldg.  
Philadelphia, Pa.

Dear Dr. Turck:

As I was meditating last night upon our correspondence relative to our Alaska work, the thought occurred to me that your Department of Social Education and Action might be able to render a helpful service in a cooperative approach with our Board to the Department of the Interior at Washington, looking toward the enforcement of the present laws which make it a penal offence to sell liquor to an Indian, either on or off an Indian reservation. This applies also to the native Indians of Alaska.

The Government's failure to enforce this law is based upon the statement of the Department of the Interior that Congress does not give them enough money to engage law-enforcement officers to take care of the situation. I do not know exactly what the budget of the Bureau of Indian Affairs is, but I think it is somewhere in the neighborhood of \$30,000,000.00 or more per year. It seems rather strange that within such a large budget it would be impossible to make adjustments that would make available enough money to enforce existing laws in a far more effective way than at present.

On the big Navajo reservation of thirteen million acres there are about twenty-five law-enforcement officers. Possibly I have overestimated the number. I have brought the matter before the Bureau of Indian Affairs in a very serious way a number of times, but have always been met with the statement that "Congress does not appropriate sufficient money to enforce the law."

The situation both on and off Indian reservations is most deplorable. In Gallup, New Mexico, which is on the edge of the Navajo reservation, the sale of liquor exceeds in volume the sale of any other commodity. It is a common sight to see Indians drunk on the streets and hardly a day passes without the jail in Gallup being filled with Indians taken in because of disorderly conduct due to drinking. Prostitutes have flocked into the city, and every other form of vice has followed in the wake of the orgy of liquor indulgence. The worst aspect of the situation is that the Indian young people are being debauched at a terrific rate, being furnished with liquor by the lowest class of unscrupulous white men. Liquor



is being bought in Gallup and in the towns and cities adjacent to the reservations and bootlegged among Indians on the reservations without any interference on the part of government agencies unless the guilty party is caught in the act and easily apprehended. The forces of Christianity ought to do something about that situation.

The situation with reference to liquor traffic in Alaska is similarly alarming and demands action. It is affirmed by the Alaska Steamship Lines that two-thirds of their cargo to Alaska ports consist of intoxicating liquor. Drunkenness on the passenger boats is a common sight. In the town of Ketchikan, with a population of approximately three thousand, there are sixty saloons of the real old-fashioned type, and the red light district, which is not prohibited by any law, is linked up with the traffic in liquor, with the result that the Alaska native coming in from his fishing operations, with cash which he receives from the canneries from the sale of his fish, is led to a saloon and robbed of all his money, which under ordinary circumstances would be enough to maintain his family for the rest of the year. This is not an uncommon occurrence. The percentage of orphans in Alaska is higher than any other part of the United States, largely due to the deaths from alcoholism and deeds of violence which follow in its wake.

A recent report of the National Resources Committee, Alaska Section, which is quite an imposing document, contains the following statement:

"While there is nothing inherently bad in the presence of white traders in the native communities of Alaska, the increased emphasis on the sale of liquor to natives which has occurred since the repeal of prohibition complicates what might otherwise be a relatively simple problem. Because the Alaska native is thrown into continual contact with the white man in a variety of ways and because the sale of liquor to natives in Alaska shows no prospect of regulation, the frightfully destructive effect of liquor on these natives must be considered."

How tragic! The debauching of the natives is admitted in an official government document, and the reasons given are the bad example of white men and the lack of any legislation to regulate and control the liquor business for the sake of protecting the natives.

At the last meeting of the Home Missions Council action was taken regarding this matter, copy of which is enclosed. The Secretary of the Home Missions Council interviewed the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in accordance with this action, but no steps have been taken. My greatest fear now is that the Bureau of Indian Affairs, in order to clear its skirts from responsibility, will take steps toward repealing the law which makes it a penal offence to sell liquor to an Indian. That is the easiest way out, but it is not the way that the Christian forces of America would choose.

I am wondering whether you have any contacts with the Federal Government or any influence which would enable you to cooperate with us or with the Home Missions Council Committees on Indian and Alaska Work to secure some drastic action on the part of the government to curb this evil which is working such devastation among Indians in the States and in Alaska. Can you propose any method of stirring up Christian public sentiment to bring pressure to bear upon the government to appro-



prate a few hundred thousand dollars out of the billions that are now being given away to buy votes, for the enforcement of law and the saving of life among these aborigines? I shall be very happy to have any suggestions that you may offer looking toward cooperative action.

With best wishes, I am

Faithfully yours,

JMS:PDS



(Action taken by Home Missions Council relative to necessity of action by the Federal Government to place restrictions upon the sale and use of liquor among the Alaskan native tribes)

"Representatives of the denominations engaged in missionary work in the Territory of Alaska who have recently visited that field have reported to the Committee on Alaska the deplorable conditions which prevail throughout the Territory resulting from the unrestricted traffic in intoxicating liquor. The social and moral devastation, wrought particularly among the native population through excessive use of intoxicants since the repeal of the Prohibition Amendment, is promoting the prevalence of social diseases, disrupting family life, increasing conditions of poverty, and threatens to destroy the progress that has been achieved during the past seventy years as the result of the persistent efforts of Christian missionaries to encourage total abstinence and the adoption of Christian social standards.

"The representatives of the Church and of the Federal Government in Alaska are aware of the menace of the present situation and of the necessity for speedy relief. Because of the failure, to date, of existing laws which were designed to protect the Indians in States and Territories from the indulgence in the use of intoxicants, and because of the exploitation of the natives by the representatives of the liquor traffic, the native tribes have appealed for the help of the Christian forces of the Nation.

"In view of the serious nature of this situation in its effect upon the health and well-being of the native people of Alaska, the Home Missions Council and the Council of Women for Home Missions, expressing the attitude of the mission boards of the evangelical denominations in America, urgently request the Bureau of Indian Affairs which is responsible for the welfare of the native population in Alaska, to adopt such measures as may be effective in prohibiting the purchase and possession of intoxicating liquor by the natives of Alaska, in accordance with existing laws relative to the use of liquor among all Indian tribes within the jurisdiction of the United States Government.

"We are encouraged to note that the question of enacting effective temperance legislation occupied an important share of the attention of the Territorial Legislature at its last session. It is the desire of the Home Missions Councils to strengthen the hands of the religious and social agencies and of industrial leaders in Alaska in their effort to influence the enactment of measures at the next session of the Territorial Legislature to control the sale and use of liquor and to introduce courses in temperance education into the territorial schools.

"Further recommended that the Executive Secretary of the Home Missions Council, accompanied by such representatives of the cooperating mission boards as he may select, be authorized to bring this important matter to the personal attention of the Secretary of the Interior and of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, and to convey our solicitude regarding this matter to the Territorial Governor and to the Territorial Legislature at an early date, and to adopt such measures as they may deem wise and proper, to enlist the interest and support of Christians of all faiths throughout the Nation in cooperation with the Christian people of Alaska, in preserving the native tribes from the moral and physical destruction with which they are threatened under the prevailing conditions, and to adopt effective measures of liquor control for the entire Territory."



